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REPORT OF A COMMITTEE

OF THE

Board of Directors for Public Institutions

IN RELATION TO THE CONDITION

OF THE

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LUNATIC HOSPITAL,

MADE MAY 23, 1862.



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REPORT ON LUNATIC HOSPITAL.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS, }
BOSTON, *May* 23, 1862. }

THE Committee appointed to consider the subject of dining and reception rooms, and further bathing accommodations at the Lunatic Hospital, submit the following

REPORT.

They have thoroughly considered the matters referred to them, and find that the necessary conveniences cannot be arranged for want of room. The result of their examination of the premises has satisfied them that another and more important subject demands attention. They find that the capacity of the Hospital and grounds is totally inadequate for the present number of inmates. The building is improperly crowded, and so badly constructed and ventilated that its beneficial purposes are in a great measure defeated for want of conveniences such as insane patients require. Additional room is imperatively necessary for at least fifty inmates. Common humanity demands it. With accommodations intended for only one hundred, there are now nearly double that number. The city charges alone are upwards of one hundred and twenty, or two

thirds of the whole, and are constantly increasing in numbers. If we provide only for this class, the necessity for more room will still exist.

The people of Boston have just reason to be proud of the public and private charities of the city. Blest as a wealthy, thriving, and prosperous community, their liberality in good works knows no bounds. Whenever suffering humanity appeals for aid it finds ready and generous sympathy. The Massachusetts Hospital and the McLean Asylum, both richly endowed, and constantly receiving assistance from the wealthy, contribute largely to relieve those able to avail themselves of the advantages they offer. As far as possible they also aid to alleviate the distress of those unable to pay for treatment. Extended as their conveniences are, however, they are not equal to the increasing demands of a fast-growing community.

With all her existing charities, the City is constantly providing others. The authorities have taken the initiative for the establishment of a Free City Hospital. It is intended for the indigent, and also, at moderate charge, for persons of limited means, to a whom the expense of medical or surgical treatment at home is more than they can bear. The premises will consist of costly structures, which are to be furnished with all the modern appliances that skill and experience can suggest. A square of some seven acres of valuable city land has been dedicated to the purpose; the foundations for the buildings laid, and the walls in rapid course of erection. By another

year the whole will be completed and the institution a permanence.

Important as medical hospitals are, they dwindle into insignificance when compared with the necessities for hospitals for mental disease. Insanity is no respecter of persons. The rich are no more exempt from its attacks than the poor. The histories of asylums record the wreck of many a brilliant intellect. Few persons, not connected with an institution for the insane, have any idea of the extent of this subtle and fearful malady. All know something of physical suffering, for that can be treated at home, while mental ills can be cared for only at an asylum. How important, then, that all in our power should be done for those thus afflicted. The sufferer may be the wife, the child, the parent, or the brother or sister of either of us. With a suitable hospital and proper treatment much of misery may be alleviated and many a mind, and even life, saved, that would otherwise be lost.

Lunatic asylums are not prisons, nor their inmates convicts or criminals. They are places of refuge for the afflicted where they can receive the care and treatment necessary for their relief. Many places make liberal provision for such, but Boston is remiss and backward. The Boston Hospital is not sufficient for its purpose, nor equal to the demands upon it. It is a city institution, and should be one in which the citizens might feel commendable pride. The tax payers have a right to demand that it should be fully up to the times in all proper conveniences. They contribute to its support, and it should be an institution of such capacity as to afford them the opportunity,

when unfortunately necessary, to avail themselves of its advantages at a moderate charge. They should not be compelled to carry their friends to private establishments, less accessible, and at a much larger cost for board. As the Hospital now is they cannot be so accommodated. Almost daily applications for admission are refused for want of room and proper conveniences.

The original buildings were erected twenty-three years ago, for a county receptacle. At that time the mode of treatment of the insane was very different from that of the present day. In but few hospitals were any scientific efforts made for radical cure. The patients were generally supposed to be beyond the chance of improvement. If an insane person was sent to one of them, it was with a view that he might be restrained from injuring himself or others. The custody, rather than the cure, was the main object.

In but few instances were the conveniences of home ever thought advisable in a hospital. Strong rooms were deemed a necessity, and many an unfortunate passed years of his life in cells with iron grated doors and windows. This course of treatment had a tendency to increase rather than diminish the excitement of the patient, and consequently instead of his condition improving he grew hopelessly worse. Many of our citizens remember the "Cottage," with its block of cells and its score of violent, naked, and filthy inmates, for whom it was thought no more could be done. Such cells and such patients were not uncommon. Every hospital had them. Fortunately this state of things has now passed away. It is a fact

worthy of mention that the abrogation of "cells" in Massachusetts institutions first began at the Boston Hospital, and it is due to Dr. Walker to say that he inaugurated the reform. For a long time many superintendents supposed that "strong rooms" could not be dispensed with, and as late as the erection of the Taunton Hospital a block of them was built as a supposed necessity. Through the exertions of one of the Trustees, who was formerly a Director of the Boston Hospital, and had witnessed the success of Dr. Walker's experiment, their use was abandoned, and subsequently they were torn down.

Dr. Walker's theory proved right, but it took time to demonstrate it. Kindness, confidence, and patience effected wonders. One after another the "Cottage" patients were transferred to the halls and to companionship with the other inmates. Its good effect was soon visible. Desperation and despondency gave way to self-respect and hope, and even the "mad man" was at times ashamed to render himself ridiculous in the eyes of his fellows. A desire to appear less crazy than their associates began to possess them. Returning reason began to develop in many, and, aided by the skill of the attentive Superintendent, sound minds were restored to some, who, when confined in the "cells," were said to be incurable. Now such things as "cells" and "strong rooms" are not known in any hospital of character or importance.

Humanity, in this branch of medical skill, may be said to be now in the ascendent. Men of science are making insanity a study. The people have begun to learn that the mind once thrown from its balance can

be restored. To accomplish this the sufferer must be removed from the exciting causes of his injury. He must have quiet and regularity in his habits. He must be clear from the chance of unnatural stimulants, both physical and mental. He must have unceasing care and attention. This he cannot secure at home, but only in an asylum. There he must receive kindness, and as far as possible every comfort, for experience has clearly demonstrated that the nearer the hospital assimilates to the conveniences of home, so, just in proportion, is the chance of cure rendered more possible.

The city institution does not meet these requirements. Its present capacity is not capable of furnishing the proper accommodations. It was up to the times when built, but is behind the necessities of the present day. Amongst other matters requisite to make a perfect hospital, according to recommendations adopted at a Convention of Superintendents of American Lunatic Asylums, and approved by all who have given attention to the subject, it is stated that, —

“Every hospital having provision for two hundred or more patients, should have in it at least eight distinct wards for each sex, making sixteen classes in the entire establishment.” Our hospital has but six wards in all, being three for each sex, and perfect classification is not possible.

“Each ward should have in it a parlor, a dining-room, a dumb-waiter, a bath-room, &c.” Ours have neither. What were originally intended for parlors are necessarily used for congregate sleeping-rooms. Separate ward dining-rooms we have none, but, as far

as the capacity of the general dining-rooms will admit, the patients are compelled to take their meals together, be they the convalescents, the demented, or the violent. There is but one bath-tub to each wing, and the want of room prevents the introduction of more. To these the inmates of the three wards must resort for their baths. As many of them need bathing every day, and as statute law requires that all must have a bath once a week, the inconvenience is manifest without further comment.

“No ceiling of any story occupied by patients should be less than twelve feet in height.” Instead of meeting this requirement we have no room where the height is greater than nine feet and ten inches, and some are as low as nine feet. Proper ventilation in them is not possible.

“The main building should contain receiving-rooms for company.” Ours has no reception-rooms whatever. The only apartments available for visitors to the patients are the dining-rooms, and these can only be used the short time between the preparation for meals. As their capacity is very limited, visitors are compelled to be in such proximity to each other that conversation with their friends upon family or private matters is next to impossible. Convalescents and incurables, whether boarders or city charges, are all assembled together, for there is no opportunity to classify or accommodate them otherwise. The chapel also is inconvenient and insufficient. With a chaplain regularly engaged to perform services on each Sabbath, the room in which they are holden is not large enough to accommodate all who wish to attend.

Thus much of the wants of the Hospital in its bearing upon humane considerations. We come now to consider them in a financial view. In doing so we start upon a basis of facts established by the experience of last year.

The entire expenses of the Hospital for 1861 for 178 inmates were \$23,830.24, being \$133.87½ per year, or \$2.57½ per week for each patient.

The average cost of the material of meals was 66⅙ cents per week, or \$34.42 per year, and of medicines \$3.16½ per year, making a total annual cost of \$37.58½ per annum for each inmate.

Of the whole number of inmates 58 were boarders. If we deduct \$2,179.93, which was the cost of their support, from the total expenses, it will leave \$21,650.31, as the cost of the City charges, being \$180.42 per year, or \$3.47 per week for each.

If now we deduct from the whole expenses the sum received for boarders, which was \$8,578.00, it will show the net expenses of the institution for the year to have been \$15,252.24, being \$85.69 per year, or \$1.64⅙ per week for each patient.

The cost for one hundred additional boarders would be only, —

Materials for meals and medicines, at \$37.58½ . . .	\$3,758 50
Three male attendants, at \$18 per month . . .	648 00
Three female attendants, at \$14 per month . . .	504 00
Cost of board for six attendants, at \$2 per week . . .	624 00
Interest on improvement, say	3,000 00
Extra fuel, lights, &c., say	500 00
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	\$9,034 50

Making \$90.34 per annum, or \$1.73¾ per week, for each.

Adding the cost for the 100 additional to the expenses of last year, which were \$23,830.24, and the support of 278 inmates is shown to be \$32,864.74, being \$118.42 per year, or \$2.27 per week for each.

If now we deduct from the whole expenses the sum of \$24,178.00 which would be received from boarders, estimating upon the increased accommodations being occupied by them, and at only \$3.00 per week, it will leave the total net cost of the institution for the year at \$8,686.74. Dividing this sum by 120, the number of "City charges," and it gives \$72.59 per year, or \$1.39 per week as the net cost of support of insane city paupers.

With improved accommodations, it is believed, a higher paying class of patients would be received in sufficient numbers to render the institution self-supporting.

In view of the foregoing facts and suggestions, the Committee submit that judicious economy, throwing aside all considerations of humanity, demands that additional accommodations for at least one hundred patients should be provided. To meet this exigency it was thought that improvements might be made in the old buildings, and new wings erected that would furnish the necessary conveniences, and also render the Hospital comparable in a measure with similar institutions elsewhere. To that end the Committee directed the preparation of plans for two wings, to run northerly from the present wings. When these were completed it was found that a greater space of land would be required to carry out the contemplated improvement.

Can the necessary quantity be obtained upon the present location? On the easterly side, the grounds of the House of Correction are within twenty feet of the Hospital. There is not room for a wing there without the annexation of a strip of land from the former establishment. On the westerly side it is still worse. M street as laid out, but not opened, runs within about twelve feet of the end of the building. To place a wing there would encroach upon it. There seems to be no valid reason why it may not be discontinued, and the Board of Aldermen have been petitioned to that effect. Even with that accomplished, there will yet be a lack of extent of premises. The whole quantity of our grounds is a little over four acres. An institution to accommodate three hundred patients should not have less than twenty acres. More would be better, for there cannot be too much.

The inmates of a lunatic asylum require out-of-door exercise. They should be in the open air as much as possible. The limits afforded them should be rendered inviting by abundance of pleasant walks, ornamented with attractive shrubbery and flowers. The beauties of nature go further toward calling back reason to the beclouded mind than any other appliance.

The adjoining estate westerly is that formerly occupied for the Alms House department, and was sold in 1857 to Harrison Loring, Esq. It is greatly to be regretted that the city authorities, instead of disposing of it, did not connect it with the Hospital premises. Had they realized the importance and necessity of extensive grounds for such an institution, they un-

doubtedly would have done so. The idea of the Hospital being hemmed in so closely, and particularly with business pursuits, evidently occurred to them when they negotiated the sale. One of the conditions of the bond for a deed, and which is to go into every conveyance, provides that, "In case it shall appear to the satisfaction of the Board of Directors, or a majority of the same, that the patients in the Lunatic Hospital shall be injuriously affected by the noise, or from other causes growing out of the business operations on the said lands, then the said sale shall be void; and the city shall take possession of the same, giving the parties interested six months notice of such intention."

It is the duty of the Board to study the interests of the institution, and the welfare of the inmates. While the city should protect itself in all its rights in the premises, care should be taken not to injure those of others.

A portion of the premises might perhaps be secured without recourse to the bond; but the question naturally arises whether it would be more than a temporary relief, and whether it would be advisable, with only such advantages, to incur the expense of any extended improvements. To make the best use of the present lands, and such additions as might be acquired, and the improvement of the old buildings with new extensions, would not upon the whole render the institution what it should be. The old building cannot be suitably modernized, and any attempt to make the new part conform to it, would render the latter much less suitable than it should be. It would require a large outlay to complete the improvements, and when

finished the Hospital would be, at best, but a patched up concern. It would fail to meet the requirements of its purpose, and would be unworthy of the enlightened intelligence and liberality of our citizens.

As anything done now should be with a view to a permanency of, it may be, a half a century or more, the Committee may well hesitate in recommending improvements at the present location. The city is but as a giant in its infancy. The next decade, should our national troubles be happily settled, will be likely to double its population, and will roll up its numbers with accelerated speed in succeeding years. With the proportion of the business of the great teeming West, which, for the want of seaports elsewhere to accommodate the trade, must come here, nothing can stop her progress in commercial importance. It cannot be many years before the entire water front of that section may be required for shipping, and perhaps converted into a dock with a basin and wharves.

With this change would come the necessary store-houses and work-shops, and sooner or later, it may be in five or ten years, the institution would be found almost surrounded by an active business community. As a lunatic asylum should always be situated so that the patients may be free from the chance of any kind of annoyance or excitement from outside, it will readily be seen how improper the present site would be under such circumstances as we have suggested.

The more the Committee examine the subject the more they are embarrassed by its magnitude and importance, and the difficulties attending it. That something must be done is apparent to all who have given

the matter any attention. The want of more accommodations is pressing now and daily augmenting. The excitements consequent upon the present war will, when peace is restored, tend largely to increase the demand.

It is for the City Council to say what shall be done, and not for this Board to dictate. It may not be improper, however, to suggest the consideration whether good economy and a regard for the future does not commend a removal and the erection of suitable buildings elsewhere.

MOSES KIMBALL,	} <i>Committee.</i>
JUSTIN JONES,	
J. P. BRADLEE,	
JONAS FITCH,	

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